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# Detroit / River Rouge Oil Spill Unified Command News Release

Information Center

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Contact: Joint

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## **Search narrows in oil investigation Boat cleaning to begin**

DETROIT—The Detroit/River Rouge Oil Spill Unified Command is narrowing its search for the source of the worst oil spill in a decade on the Great Lakes, according to U.S. Coast Guard Cmdr. Patrick Gerrity, Captain of the Port of Detroit and Incident Commander for this spill response.

“We have been able to eliminate ships and boats as a source of the problem,” Gerrity said. “We now are focusing our investigation on sewer outfalls.”

“The predicted thunderstorm for Tuesday evening is a concern for clean-up crews,” Gerrity said. “As a precaution, we have placed additional responders and containment booms at outfalls along the River Rouge,” Gerrity said. “If the thunderstorms do occur, our spill response teams will respond immediately.

“Our goal is to prevent further pollution and to locate the potential source, or sources, of the oil spill.”

### **Boat cleaning starts Wednesday**

“I’m glad we finally are able to announce that we can help owners whose boats were contaminated in the last week” Gerrity said.

A boat-cleaning station will operate from 9 a.m.–7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, April 17-19 at the middle parking lot of the Elizabeth Park boat ramp, Trenton. The cleaning station can accommodate boats only 30 feet and smaller, on trailers. Owners of larger boats should contact the claims center at (800) 280-7118 for help.

“People should avoid touching the oil—on boats or in the water,” Gerrity said.

Anyone with questions about the boat cleaning should call (313)568-9572.

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## **Response activities**

More than 150 emergency responders from local, state, and federal agencies are working to contain and clean up the oil, as well as investigate the potential sources of the oil spill on the River Rouge. The spill is estimated now at more than 15,000 gallons with the expectation that the final total will be considerably higher.

Clean-up costs have exceeded \$800,000. A convicted violator faces penalties of up to \$27,500 a day for each violation and triple the entire cost of the cleanup.

Two turtles and 77 birds have been affected by the spill. Clean-up crews have found six dead birds, but it has not been determined whether the spill is the cause of death.

Residents who see oiled wildlife should contact Betty King, wildlife rehabilitator, at (734) 671-1086.

**NOTE TO EDITORS—Photo opportunities:** Boat cleaning ramps will be open to news media for photos and interview during cleaning hours. Also, a barge is working on the River Rouge using a crane to remove oily debris. Barge operations will be visible from the Jefferson Street bridge.

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